



is a good locality for nature photography. Most of the habitat is dry rocky boulders strewn with grassy patches, scrub jungle and isolated pools of water collected during the monsoons. The total area of the hill is about 10 ha of which the largest patch of grass meadow will be close to 1 ha. During one such visit on 8 July 2012, 1100 hrs – I spotted a family of Sandgrouse—a pair of adults with a few weeks old chick in a grassy area. I was

able to take several good photographs of the same and from the images, Dr. Sainuddin Pattazhy, Department of Zoology, SN College, Kollam identified them as Chestnut-bellied Sandgrouses (Figs 1, 2, 3). It is interesting to note this species, which is not found in elsewhere Kerala, has chosen this isolated rock to breed while its nearest ideal habitat is about 60 km east in Tamil Nadu. I visited this area again on 4 August 2012 and could see one bird. There was no sign of the chick.

Acknowledgments

I would like to thank Dr. Sainuddin Pattazhy for identifying the species from the photographs.

References

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 Sashikumar, C., Praveen, J., Palot, M.J. and Nameer, P.O. (2011) *Birds of Kerala: Status and Distribution*. DC Books, Kottayam. Pp: 724

Large Grey Babbler *Turdoides malcolmi* and Sykes's Warbler *Iduna rama* in Walayar: first photographic record from Kerala

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As part of the Malabar Ornithological Survey 2010 – 2011 – a bird survey project sponsored by the Forests and Wildlife Department, Kerala, Palakkad Forest Division was surveyed from 18 to 25 March 2011; Walayar and the neighbouring areas were visited from 20 to 23 March. Walayar reservoir is situated at the Kerala border adjacent to Tamil Nadu. There was extensive open meadow around the reservoir, as the water level was low; bordering it on the north-eastern side, close to the Tamil Nadu side there was a patch of dry thorny scrub, dominated by *Acacia nilotica* trees of about 5 m height, interspersed with *Prosopis juliflora* and some other species of trees. On 22 March, we spent about four hrs in this patch and



Sykes's Warbler



Large Grey Babbler

around, from 9.00 AM to 1.00 PM, observing the birds. We noticed a group of medium-sized birds moving around in the foliage of the trees, and when we approached closer, they moved on to another tree on the far side. They were making harsh nasal call occasionally, which was familiar to one of us (CSK) elsewhere in India, as belonging to Large Grey Babbler *Turdoides malcolmi*. The birds were extremely wary and never allowed a close look. After following the group for quite a long time, PAV was able to procure a photograph of one of the birds, which clearly showed black lores, pale yellow eyes and pale grey head, confirming the identity of the species. The shape of the birds was typical of *Turdoides* babblers, they were larger than Jungle Babbler *Turdoides striata*; as they flew from one tree to another, the pale outer feathers of the long tail – another diagnostic feature of the species – were visible. Sashikumar *et. al.*(2011) have included the

species in the Secondary List of the book, quoting an unconfirmed record from Chinnar Wildlife sanctuary and some other sightings from Tamil Nadu close to the Kerala border at Periyar and Parambikkulam Tiger Reserves.

In the same scrub, we found several warblers also. PAV took several photographs of one particular individual which was later identified as Sykes's Warbler *Iduna rama* with the help of J Praveen. In the field, the bird was almost the same size and shape of the familiar Blyth's Reed-Warbler *Acrocephalus dumetorum*, many of which were present in the scrub, but distinct from that species with pale grey upperparts, a supercilium that extended behind the eyes and longer tail. Flatter forehead and absence of dark tip on the lower mandible of the longer bill differentiated it from Booted Warbler *Iduna caligata*. According to Sashikumar *et. al.* (2011), this species has not been recorded in Kerala.

To the best of our knowledge, this is the first photographic record of these species from Kerala.

Acknowledgements

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References:

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A Report of Large Grey Babbler from Attappady Hills, Kerala

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Large Grey Babbler *Turdoides malcolmi* is an open land species which is widespread in the whole of Peninsular India except the high rainfall area in the western coast. Until recently, the bird has not been positively recorded from Kerala though Ali (1969) included it in the state list tentatively based on statement by T.F. Bourdillon from Travancore. Sashikumar *et. al.* (2011a) included it in the secondary list as there were no confirmed reports from the state. However, the bird is present extremely close to the state border at Lower Periyar Ghats which about eight km from Thekkady in Periyar Tiger Reserve, Sethumadai which is about 12 km from Parambikulam Tiger Reserve, Amaravathi checkpoint which is